



**Jane Whitacre, Executive Director**

**Testimony to House Health Policy Committee**

**9:00 AM, Room 519, House Office Building, Lansing, MI**

**RE: HB 4691, 4206**

**September 6, 2016**

My name is Jane Whitacre, Executive Director of Michigan Breastfeeding Network and I am here today in support of Representative Geiss's House Bill 4691, that would ban direct Internet sales and House Bill 4206 that will make sure that human breastmilk is collected safely and ethically and mothers and their infants are protected. We are especially supportive that both nonprofits and for-profit companies would have to follow guidelines from the Human Milk Banking Association of North America, which outlines procedures for collecting, storing and dispensing human breast milk.

**The US Surgeon general recommends breastfeeding a baby for a full year.**

- ❖ Despite this, 2014 CDC data shows that Michigan ranks 33 out of 50 states for breastfeeding and, with an initiation rate of 75.3%, is below the national average of 79.2%.
- ❖ Lower initiation rates and breastfeeding rate drop-offs are even more pronounced across race and socioeconomic factors.
- ❖ Many mothers do not receive the support they need to make their breastfeeding goals because of systemic barriers.
- ❖ The Michigan Breastfeeding Network works at a systems level to reduce barriers and improve supports for mothers so they can succeed to meet their breastfeeding goals.

**The Michigan Breastfeeding Network (MIBFN) has a vision that all Michigan families will live and work in a breastfeeding-friendly environment. We do this:**

- ❖ Through advocacy, education and coalition building to create a supportive breastfeeding culture.
- ❖ By supporting a network of 20 community-based breastfeeding coalitions in the state.
- ❖ By serving as a backbone organization in breastfeeding collective impact efforts across our state.
- ❖ By operating as a leading source for breastfeeding knowledge and expertise in Michigan.
- ❖ With the business community by educating them about workplace requirements to provide break time for nursing mothers and Michigan's Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act 197 of 2014, which clarifies that women can breastfeed in public, anytime/ anywhere, without discrimination.

As knowledge about the miraculous benefits of breastmilk increases and the demand for human milk grows, we need to have public policy that will support and encourage breast milk as the best milk for all babies, while assuring that milk banks follow clear standards of safety, access and equity. Thank you.